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CIA/CR/78-14984 m

3.5(c)
3.3(b)(1)

3.5(c)

[redacted]

MICROFILMED

Roberto Eduardo VIOLA
(Phonetic: veeOHlah)

ARGENTINA

Commander in Chief of the Army; Member, Ruling Junta (since August 1978)

OFFICE OF CENTRAL REFERENCE

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Lt. Gen. Roberto Viola was promoted to Commander in Chief of the Army and member of the ruling junta after serving since 1975 as Army Chief of Staff. A personal friend of and a key advisor to President Jorge Videla, Viola assumed Videla's position on the junta when the latter retired from the military to become the civilian President in August 1978.

Before the military coup of March 1976, Viola enjoyed the respect of both his peers and his subordinates, but since then he has become the target of considerable criticism by those who disagree with his moderate philosophy. Unlike many of his colleagues, particularly "hardliners" like Carlos Suarez Mason, who retired as Commander of the First Army Corps in August 1978, Viola believes that the government must maintain a channel of communication with political and labor organizations. Some Argentine observers claim that his openness to dialogue with various sectors outside the military stems from personal ambition; they allege that he wants to build his own power base in the hope of becoming President. Other detractors accuse Viola of adversely influencing Videla, who might govern more forcefully and dynamically without him.

3.3(b)(1)

[redacted] Viola and Videla are both "cut of the same cloth. . . both are low-key [redacted] but Viola controls the army and at the moment that's what counts." [redacted] officials who have met Viola are generally impressed by his frankness, cordiality and objectivity. He has been a major influence in the government's move to reverse Argentina's human rights abuses and is optimistic about improvements in US-Argentine relations.

3.3(b)(1)

3.3(b)(1)

(cont.)

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3.5(c)

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3.5(c)
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[redacted]

MICRO DAILY

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Roberto Eduardo Viola was born on 13 October 1924 in Buenos Aires. An infantry officer, he graduated from the Argentine Military Academy in 1949, from the Superior War School in 1955 and from the Center for Higher Studies in 1966. He served as military advisor to the Inter-American Defense Board from 1967 to 1969, as subdirector and then acting director of the Military Academy from 1971 to 1972 and as commander of the Third Infantry Brigade in Corrientes Province in 1973. In late 1973 he was named secretary general of the Army General Staff, a new post that replaced the Army's G-5 position (Policy, Research and Development). He held the post until 1975, when he became commander of the Second Army Corps in Rosario. He was promoted to army Chief of Staff in August 1975 when Videla vacated the post to become Commander in Chief of the Army.

As Army Chief of Staff, Viola was intimately involved in planning the military coup that ousted President Maria de Peron in March 1976. Like Videla, he had long advocated keeping the military out of the internal political imbroglio. By October 1975, however, he had become convinced of the necessity of intervening in the moribund Peronist government.

Viola is often described as a "thinker" concerned with social as well as political issues. Cautious and reserved, he is quiet, intelligent and straightforward. 3.3(b)(1)

The general is exceedingly hardworking, 6.2(d)
He is a chain smoker. Married to the former Nelida Giorgio, he has a grown son and daughter. Viola speaks French, Italian and some English.

18 September 1978

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